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ABSTRACT

A report statistically examines the problem of deferred maintenance in U.S. public schools, including the repair funding required to comply with federal mandates in the next 3 years; federal, state, and local contributions by state in 1991-92; the estimated percentage of schools needing repairs listed by state; and the changes in apportionment of state budgets from 1987 to 1994. Public school maintenance funding trends and options are discussed, including lease financing and privatization. The report reveals that decades of deferred maintenance, combined with rising anti-tax sentiments and an aging population, have created a $112 billion national problem that threatens the opportunities of youth and the future competitiveness of the United States. A model for passing a bond issue as illustrated through the Coalition for Adequate School Housing (Sacramento, California) is examined. (GR)

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Quality of Life...

Investing in Our Children's Future

ED 436 931

THE CASE FOR BUILDING AND MAINTAINING OUR PUBLIC SCHOOLS

EF 005 481

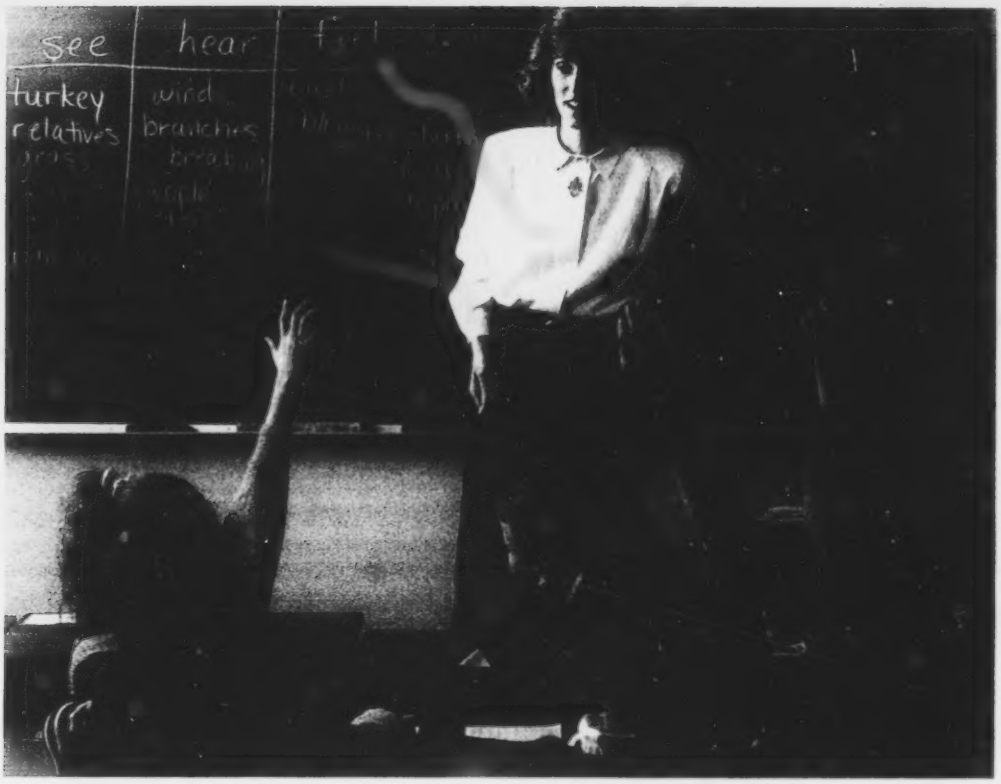
THE ASSOCIATED GENERAL CONTRACTORS OF AMERICA
SKILL · RESPONSIBILITY · INTEGRITY

LEADERSHIP FOR LEARNING

Making a Difference...One Brick at a Time

Lees Summit North High School, Lees Summit, MO. Photo by Michael Spillers, Kansas City, MO

America's 80,000 public schools are in bad shape and getting worse. The neglect of those buildings carries a high price, not only for the 42 million students in U.S. schools, but for the future of the nation. Despite demand for more facilities, state and local governments are cutting school budgets, leaving less for new construction and deferring necessary maintenance and repair. In 1994, 21 states cut taxes and others continue to follow. Bond issues are meeting resistance from taxpayers and are being rejected in growing numbers. The federal government, which contributes 6% of the school district budget, is also cutting education funding. A $100 million education infrastructure improvement grant was rescinded by Congress in 1995.



The shortfall in funding comes as the need for investment is accelerating. Consider the following:

- 74% of public schools—about 59,000—are more than 25 years old (nearly a third are more than 50 years old).
- 14 million children go to schools that need extensive repair or replacement.
- The General Accounting Office (GAO) estimates that $112 billion is needed to bring our $422 billion investment in facilities up to good condition.
- About two-thirds of our schools are classified as being in adequate condition, but many still need preventive maintenance or m. or repairs, such as a new roof or new plumbing.
- The Department of Labor estimates that by the year 2000, half of all new jobs will require an education beyond high school.
- The National Education Association estimates that $250 billion is needed to install electrical wiring and other infrastructure to support computers and electronic links that will allow the U.S. to compete in the world economy.
- The average cost of a new elementary school today is $6 million, $15 million for the average secondary school. Schools today are likely to have an original building with permanent additions and a variety of temporary buildings added at different times.
- Several state courts and Congress have recognized that the quality of the learning environment affects the education children receive. A recent North Dakota study found a direct correlation between crumbling schools and student achievement.
- A generation ago, a college graduate earned about twice as much as a high school dropout. Today, the ratio is nearly three to one.

To compound the problem, the GAO notes that many schools are deferring maintenance as a result of budget cuts. "Deferred maintenance speeds up deterioration of buildings, and costs escalate accordingly, further eroding the nation's multibillion investment in school facilities." In one case, a deferred $600 roof repair ultimately cost $372,000 to replace the roof and repair water damage. In other words, for every $1 not invested, the system fell another $620 behind. If maintenance continues to be deferred, many schools that are now in adequate condition will soon join those classified as inadequate.

The cost of repairing, upgrading, and constructing schools is high. The cost of not acting is higher. The number of children in substandard schools continues to grow as the money to maintain, repair, and replace this valuable infrastructure investment shrinks. It's a dynamic that spells trouble for our society.

A third of American children are trying to get a leg up in life inside buildings that are overcrowded, poorly ventilated, structurally unsafe, or lacking adequate plumbing or lighting. If our schools can't make the grade, neither can our students.

Billions Needed for Repairs and to Comply With Federal Mandates in the Next Three Years

All schools	Amount needed ($ millions)
Make all repairs required to put schools in good overall condition	$101,200
Provide accessibility for disabled students	5,183
Manage/correct asbestos	2,395
Manage/correct lead in water and paint	387
Manage/correct underground storage tanks	303
Manage/correct radon	32
Manage/correct other requirements	2,380
TOTAL	**$111,880**

Source: U.S. General Accounting Office

Building Repairs Needed in America's Schools

Type of building feature	Percentage of schools reporting less-than-adequate building features
HVAC	36.4
Plumbing	29.8
Roofs	27.3
Exterior walls, finishes, windows, doors	26.6
Electrical power	26.4
Electrical lighting	25.4
Interior finishes, trims	24.1
Life safety codes	19.0
Framing, floors, foundations	17.9

Source: U.S. General Accounting Office

School Rating Scale

EXCELLENT: new or easily restorable to "like new" condition; only minimal routine maintenance required.

GOOD: only routine maintenance or minor repair required.

ADEQUATE: some preventive maitenance and/or corrective repair required.

FAIR: fails to meet code and functional requirement in some cases; failure(s) are inconvenient; extensive corrective maintenance and repair required.

POOR: consistent substandard performance; failure(s) are disruptive and costly; fails most code and functional requirements; requires constant attention, renovation, or replacement. Major corrective repair or overhaul required.

REPLACE: Non-operational or significantly substandard performance. Replacement required.

Source: U.S. General Accounting Office

Lees Summit North High School, Lees Summit, MO. Photo by Michael Spillers, Kansas City, MO

Traditionally the financing of public school construction has been a function of local government, with increasing state participation after the baby boom of 1950. Percentages vary widely by state, with some states shouldering as much as 90 percent of the funding to as little as 8.5 percent. State revenues are raised from general sales, personal income, and corporate taxes. Local jurisdictions raise revenue primarily from property taxes.

Recent trends reveal the leveling off of per pupil spending for education combined with increasing enrollment in public elementary and secondary schools as assistance from the federal government decreases. In 1978, the federal government contributed 9.8 percent of education revenue, but that dropped to a low of 6.1 percent in 1989–90.

Traditionally, the federal government has refrained from funding school repairs for fear of intruding on local control of primary and secondary education. Federal funding, however, would not mean control of teaching or curriculum. In fact, quality facilities give schools the flexibility to choose various educational techniques that antiquated facilities preclude. The Education Infrastructure Act of 1994 which authorized grants to school districts to repair or upgrade dilapidated buildings and construct new buildings remains unfunded. A possible solution would be a partnership among the federal, state and local governments that would support educational opportunities on a consistent national basis. This can be compared to the situation where the federal government invests in the construction of our

1991–92

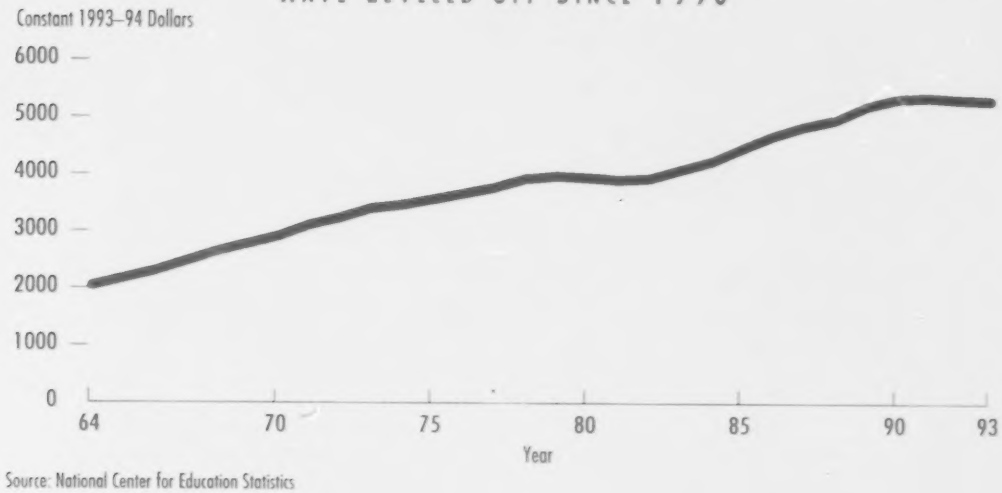
Primary and secondary public school enrollment	42,047,000
Construction expenditures	$15.7 billion
Total funds needed for construction	$112 billion
Total expenditures on primary and secondary education	$253 billion
Source of total expenditures	
- Federal	6.6%
- State	46.4%
- Local	47.0%

FEDERAL, STATE, AND LOCAL CONTRIBUTIONS BY STATE 1991–1992

State	Federal (percent)	State (percent)	Local* (percent)
Alabama	11.4	58.8	29.8
Alaska	11.5	68.0	20.5
Arizona	8.8	42.4	48.8
Arkansas	10.8	59.9	29.3
California	7.5	65.9	26.6
Colorado	5.0	42.8	52.3
Connecticut	3.2	40.7	56.0
Delaware	7.6	65.9	26.5
Florida	7.3	48.4	44.3
Georgia	7.7	47.7	44.6
Hawaii	7.5	90.3	2.2
Idaho	8.1	61.8	30.1
Illinois	6.8	28.9	64.2
Indiana	5.3	52.9	41.8
Iowa	5.3	47.3	47.4
Kansas	5.5	42.4	52.1
Kentucky	10.1	67.0	22.9
Louisiana	10.8	54.7	34.4
Maine	5.9	49.8	44.3
Maryland	5.1	38.2	56.7
Massachusetts	5.3	30.7	64.0
Michigan	6.2	26.6	67.2
Minnesota	4.5	51.6	44.0
Mississippi	17.0	53.5	29.5
Missouri	6.4	38.0	55.7
Montana	8.8	41.8	49.3
Nebraska	6.2	34.3	59.5
Nevada	4.2	38.7	57.1
New Hampshire	3.1	8.5	88.4
New Jersey	4.1	42.2	53.7
New Mexico	12.4	73.8	13.8
New York	5.6	40.3	54.1
North Carolina	7.2	64.6	28.2
North Dakota	11.1	44.8	44.1
Ohio	5.9	40.8	53.3
Oklahoma	4.6	62.2	33.2
Oregon	6.4	30.6	63.0
Pennsylvania	5.7	41.4	52.8
Rhode Island	6.0	38.5	55.5
South Carolina	9.0	48.3	42.6
South Dakota	11.1	27.0	62.0
Tennessee	10.5	42.2	47.3
Texas	6.6	43.4	50.0
Utah	6.9	57.2	35.8
Vermont	5.1	31.6	63.3
Virginia	5.8	31.1	63.1
Washington	5.7	71.6	22.6
West Virginia	7.6	67.2	25.2
Wisconsin	4.4	39.4	56.2
Wyoming	5.3	52.5	42.2
Total	**6.6**	**46.4**	**47.0**

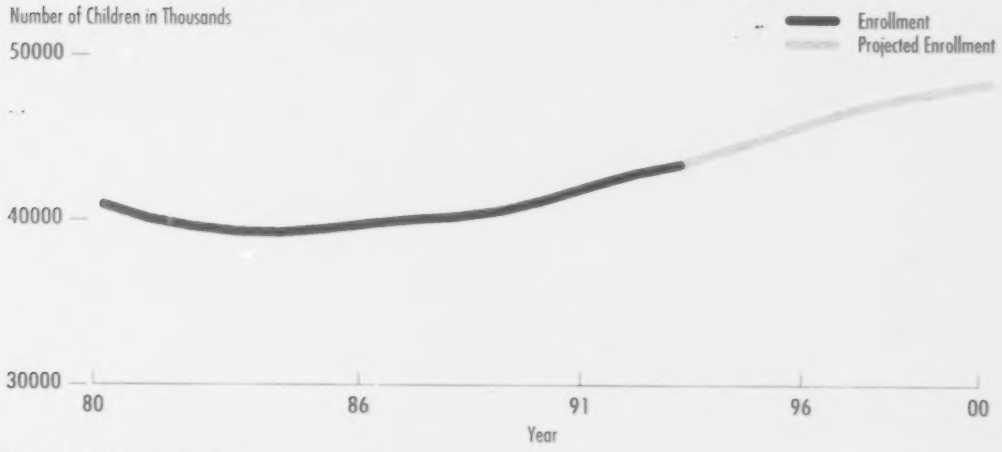
*Includes revenues from gifts and tuition and fees from patrons.
Source: National Center for Education Statistics.

U.S. Average Current per Pupil Expenditures Have Leveled off Since 1990



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

Enrollment Levels Have Begun to Increase After Reaching a Low in the Mid 1980s



Source: National Center for Education Statistics

water, wastewater, and highway facilities, but the final implementation and construction decisions are made at the state and local levels. The federal government can support investment in our nation's educational capital facility needs without becoming involved in the curriculum decisions that belong to the state and local officials.

A series of reports on public school facilities and funding by the GAO identifying school infrastructure needs created national attention following their release in 1995–1996. Shortly after the release of the final report, a federal initiative was proposed to provide $5 billion over four years to reduce interest costs on school construction and renovation by as much as 50%. Potential funding for the initiative would come from auctions of communications licenses.

State funds are being stretched as states "rob Peter to pay Paul." On average, states are spending less on education but significantly more on Medicaid and correctional facilities.

As public funds dwindle, we need to consider creative alternatives to financing our nation's future. Several attractive alternatives of debt and non-debt financing are available to states and local jurisdictions to finance the much needed school construction.

Methods of Financing Public School Construction

Debt Financing	Non-Debt Financing
• General Obligation Bonds	• Lease Financing
• Special Assessment Bonds	• Public-Private Partnerships
	• Special Purpose 501(C)3 Corporations

Estimated Needs by State

State	Percent of schools with at least one inadequate building	Percent of schools with at least one inadequate building feature	Percent of schools reporting needing to re-spend $ to repair or upgrade to good condition	Percent of schools, reporting funding needs below or above the national average ($1,700,000) Percent below	Percent above
Alabama	39.1	59.4	84.0	63.1	20.9
Alaska	44.6	69.4	80.1	37.5	42.6
Arizona	40.8	64.0	84.7	55.1	29.7
Arkansas	24.9	41.9	77.7	69.4	8.3
California	42.9	70.8	87.1	61.4	25.7
Colorado	32.2	57.6	88.7	68.5	20.2
Connecticut	30.0	57.5	77.1	47.4	29.7
Delaware	40.5	69.5	97.0	65.3	31.7
District of Columbia	49.3	91.1	96.6	47.8	48.8
Florida	31.2	57.2	84.8	51.0	33.8
Georgia	26.2	37.2	62.0	47.4	14.6
Hawaii	21.4	57.1	73.2	54.5	18.7
Idaho	31.9	56.2	86.6	73.3	13.3
Illinois	31.0	62.3	88.8	60.6	28.2
Indiana	29.2	56.2	85.0	48.7	36.3
Iowa	18.8	50.5	79.3	66.7	12.6
Kansas	38.3	54.6	88.2	71.0	17.2
Kentucky	30.9	59.3	81.1	54.9	26.2
Louisiana	38.6	49.9	87.6	63.9	23.6
Maine	37.5	60.4	84.7	72.8	11.8
Maryland	30.7	66.6	78.4	44.3	34.1
Massachusetts	40.8	75.0	91.9	73.5	18.4
Michigan	21.6	51.8	79.5	70.7	8.8
Minnesota	38.5	56.8	84.6	65.3	19.3
Mississippi	28.5	49.5	82.0	74.8	7.2
Missouri	27.3	47.5	89.5	75.8	13.7
Montana	20.4	44.8	70.4	64.4	6.0
Nebraska	35.2	44.5	75.3	56.9	18.4
Nevada	23.2	41.8	83.3	70.3	13.1
New Hampshire	38.4	58.8	87.4	72.0	15.4
New Jersey	19.1	53.0	86.9	70.6	16.4
New Mexico	29.9	69.1	93.7	67.8	25.8
New York	32.8	67.3	89.6	51.0	38.6
North Carolina	36.1	55.1	89.6	73.1	16.6
North Dakota	23.0	48.6	88.5	81.7	6.7
Ohio	38.0	76.1	95.2	72.4	22.8
Oklahoma	30.5	54.4	83.2	74.7	8.4
Oregon	38.9	62.7	96.5	79.6	16.9
Pennsylvania	21.0	41.9	69.5	48.3	21.2
Rhode Island	29.3	61.0	81.2	71.3	9.9
South Carolina	36.9	51.8	78.4	50.4	28.0
South Dakota	21.3	44.6	78.0	68.5	9.4
Tennessee	27.2	56.5	74.7	62.2	12.5
Texas	27.1	46.0	76.3	60.4	15.8
Utah	34.1	62.5	91.2	71.4	19.8
Vermont	21.4	52.6	81.6	68.3	13.3
Virginia	27.4	60.1	80.9	52.1	28.9
Washington	44.2	59.8	89.0	46.7	42.3
West Virginia	41.9	67.3	87.7	69.6	18.1
Wisconsin	32.8	48.9	78.8	65.6	13.2
Wyoming	24.4	48.7	82.5	74.0	8.5

Source: U.S. General Accounting Office
Note: Sampling errors are less than ±11 percentage points

West Queens High School, Long Island, NY Photo by Bernheim Assoc., Mt Vernon, NY

GENERAL OBLIGATION BONDS

General obligation (GO) bonds are the most common and most recognized form of financing school construction. GO bonds are backed by the full faith and credit of the issuing entity and are considered the most secure and therefore carry the lowest interest rate. Payment of the debt is not dependent upon the success or failure of the project financed, leaving the taxpayers ultimately responsible for the bonds.

The advantage of GO bonds is that it is generally the least expensive form of financing and can be used to finance non-revenue generating projects such as public schools.

A limitation of GO bonds is that most state constitutions prohibit the state from incurring any meaningful debt without first being approved through a vote of its constituents. Such approval process typically requires public debate prior to the vote which further delays the project. The debt amount may also be strictly limited and will usually require new taxes to pay the bond's debt service.

Special Assessment Bonds

Special assessment bonds are paid from revenues derived from specific taxes imposed on the property deriving a benefit from the facility. Here the local jurisdiction enjoying the direct benefit from the facility also carries the full burden of the debt. This method of financing the construction of public schools is less common than GO bonds but may be a viable choice when used in conjunction with the development of a new residential subdivision.

Non-Debt Financing

In some situations states, cities and local jurisdictions may be unable or unwilling to incur debt but face the need to build new or renovate existing school facilities. In such cases, non-debt financing may be the only alternative.

Changes in Enrollment Varied by State, With Most Increases Occurring in the Southwestern and Western States Between 1980 and 1993

Source: National Center for Education Statistics

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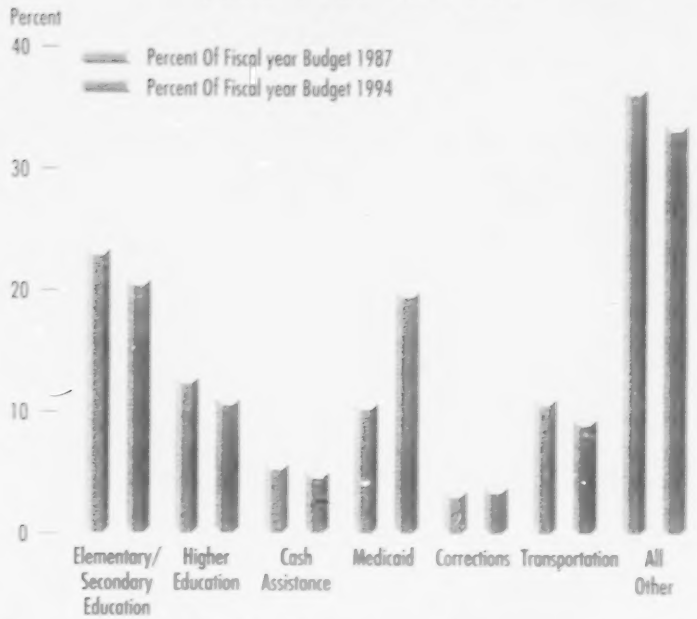
Changes in Apportionment of State Budgets From 1987 to 1994



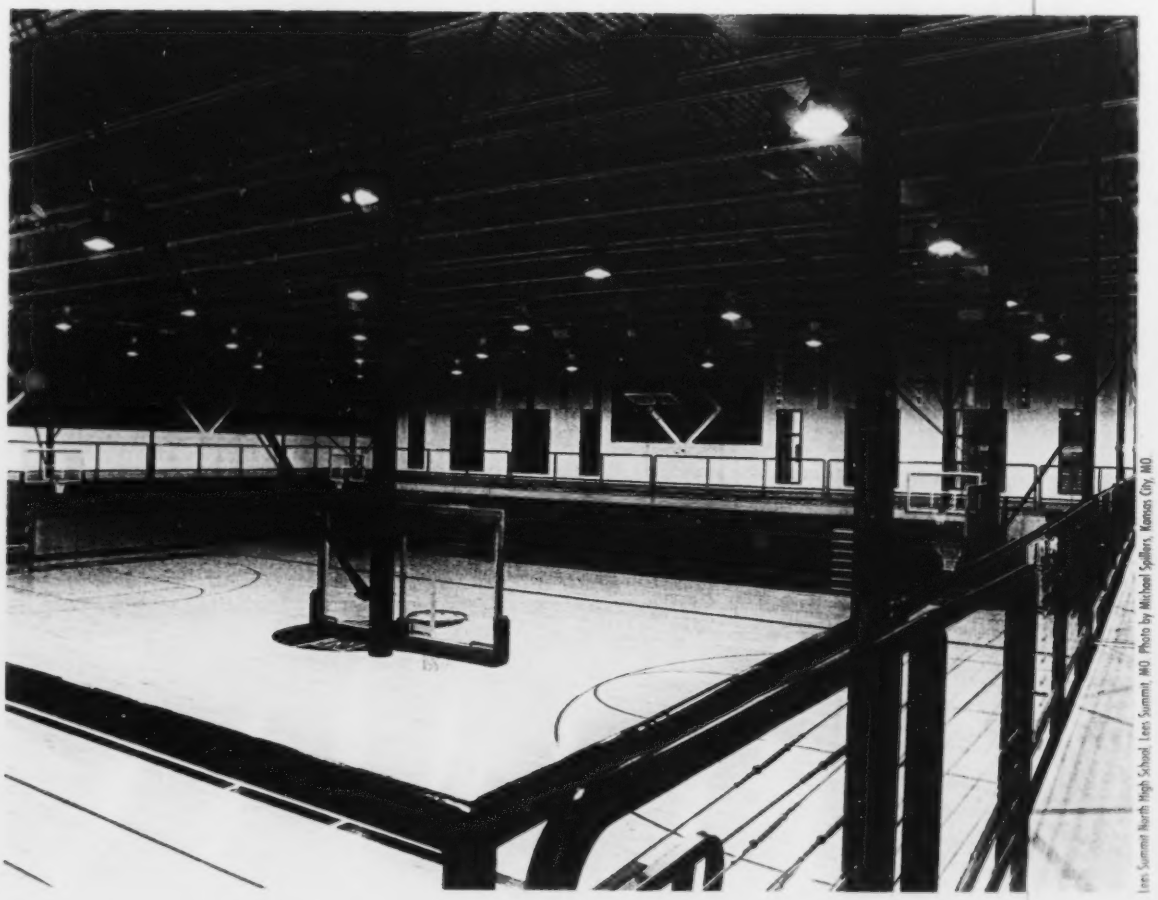
Source: National Association of State Budget Officers *1994 State Expenditure Report*

In Tennessee, two companies have formed to design, finance, and build public schools which they then sell to the local governments that operate them. The companies are building twelve schools in three counties. One project was completed under budget and the developers returned $500,000 to the county. By using cost-effective measures found in private construction, the developers are delivering quality products for less that the county could.

Lease Financing

Lease financing may take on several forms and may be called "installment purchase," "installment sales contract," or "lease purchase agreement." Regardless of the name, the key difference in lease financing and debt-financing is that the governmental unit is only obligated to pay rent on a year-by-year basis with lease financing. The lease payment must be reappropriated each year. As long as the government unit has the option to terminate the lease at the end of each fiscal year if the necessary rental payments are not appropriated, the lease financing obligation will not constitute debt. The advantage of this type of non-debt financing is that typically no vote of the electorate is required to approve the project.

In a typical lease financing agreement, the project is privately developed and owned. The developer bears the burden of obtaining the financing and the lender bears the risk of the rental payments being reappropriated. Lenders will usually weigh the long term need for the project with the risk of non-appropriation in determining the cost of financing the project. The risk of the funds not being appropriated results in lease financing being more expensive than traditional debt-financing.



Lee's Summit North High School, Lee's Summit, MO Photo by Michael Spellers, Kansas City, MO

Public-Private Partnerships: Privatization

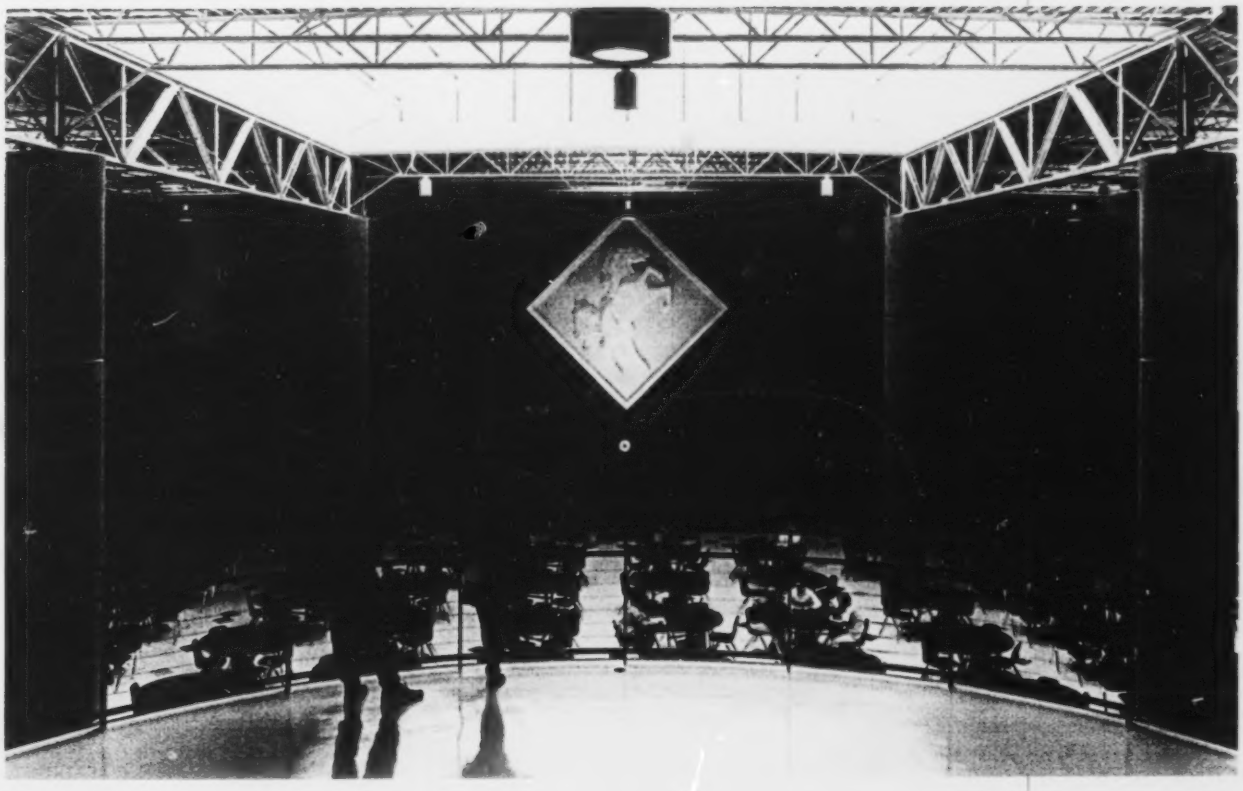
The use of privatized projects or "public-private partnerships" is becoming more common and accepted as an avenue in the development of public facilities. The use of the term "privatized" has been taken to mean that a private organization assumes the role of the public entity in the acquisition of land, obtaining land development approvals, securing financing, supervising the design and construction process, and management of the public facility once completed. The private entity may perform any combination or all of the services necessary as determined by the public entity. Ownership of the facility may remain with the private organization and may, after some predetermined period, transfer to the public agency for a nominal amount. [5]

IBM has a $25 million, 5 year commitment to "Reinventing Education." It entered a partnership with Charlotte-Mecklenburg school system in North Carolina to investigate ways in which technology can be used to achieve systemic reform. The school system will build four new schools on a 200 acre site near an IBM plant. IBM will equip the schools with state-of-the-art technology.

Lees Summit North High School Lees Summit, MO Photo by Michael Spillers, Kansas City, MO

The advantage of the public-private partnership is that it is able to leverage the strengths of the private sector to seize market opportunities to the benefit of the public. The private sector can bring savings in construction costs, operating and maintenance costs, and time in the development of the public facility. As a private entity, it is more flexible in the procurement of services, it can avoid some of the political interference associated with public projects, and it is better able to secure creative financing for the development of the facility.

Stanley Gault showed what business can do in Wooster, Ohio. As CEO with Rubbermaid, he got the company to purchase land for a new high school if the community would pay for the building. Gault and his wife personally pledged $500,000 for an indoor swimming pool and community fitness center to be built next to it. Voters passed a $32 million bond issue. Gault hopes to enlist corporations to donate training, services, and money. Now, as Chief Executive of Goodyear, Gault intends to put Goodyear's influence behind school reform, urging other corporations to donate training, services, and money.



Special Purpose 501(c)3 Non-profit Corporations

A unique form of financing public buildings, and a variation of public-private partnerships, is the use of a Special Purpose 501(c)3 Non-profit Corporation. Within specific rules of the IRS Code, the 501(c)3 corporation is able to issue tax-exempt bonds and use the proceeds to develop and own public facilities. The private entity, in conjunction with the public entity, creates the corporation which will develop and, upon completion, own the facility. This allows the public agency to gain the efficiencies of the private sector delivery while maintaining the tax-exempt status in the financial markets.

Through a development agreement, the public entity is able to out-source the risk associated with development, financing, and schedule to the private organization. The public agency makes lease payments to the 501(c)3 corporation which in turn makes payments to the bond holders. At the end of the lease term, ownership of the facility may revert to the public agency for a nominal fee.

Model for Passing Bond Issues

The nearly 800 members of CASH, the Coalition for Adequate School Housing in Sacramento, California, have successfully increased public and legislative awareness of California's growing need for new and updated school facilities. The coalition of school districts, county offices of education, architects, developers, contractors, attorneys, bond counsel, financial institutions, and others have sponsored or managed campaigns for more than $8 billion in statewide school bonds since 1982; helped develop current school facility law; and supported legislation to improve state funding of school facility construction, maintenance, and modernization.

CASH has done its homework. It knows which legislators favor bond issues and has developed a public awareness campaign to change no votes to yes. It's not shy about asking vendors who do business with schools — contractors, consultants, financial firms, attorneys, etc. — to contribute money to the campaigns.

CASH also distributes a packet with school facts, such as enrollment figures, growth projections and enrollment increases; regulations which may prohibit innovative funding, such as lottery revenue; examples of need (lunch beginning at 10:30, use of temporary classrooms); and effect of construction on the economy. The packet also lists all projects awaiting funding, summarizes roll call votes on bond issues, lists legislators by school district, and includes sample letters to the editor.

School Facilities Public Awareness Campaign Plan

1. Meet with state legislators on a regular basis. Invite them to visit school facilities.
2. List and report information about your school district's need for facilities funding with the media.
3. Make presentations about the condition of local schools to groups, such as:

   Board of Realtors

   Chamber of Commerce

   City Council

   Lions, Rotary, and similar organizations

   PTA

   School Board
4. Solicit letters to the editor of local newspapers from parents and other supporters of public education.

Conclusion

The fact that 74% of our public schools are more than 25 years old is not alarming. Such buildings should last that long and longer. Nor is it alarming that 27,000 of our public schools are more than 50 years old. Schools that are more than 50 years old would not have to be abandoned if properly maintained and rehabilitated to accommodate modern technologies and needs. What is alarming is that 14 million children attend schools that need extensive repair or replacement or pose hazards to them while schools continue to defer maintenance on buildings.

The problem of dilapidated schools has grown far beyond the fiscal capabilities of state and local governments. Decades of deferred maintenance, combined with rising anti-tax sentiments and an aging population, have created a $112 billion problem that spans the nation. The decay of our nation's schools threatens the opportunities of our youth as well as the future competitiveness of our nation. Strength and hard work are no longer enough to get ahead—quality education is a prerequisite to information age employment along with computer skills and the ability to use technologies. The cost of building and maintaining our schools is high, but the cost of doing nothing, of abdicating our responsibility to our children, is infinitely higher.

The investment in our schools today is an investment in our future.

Topic	GAO Report
Overall condition of buildings Condition of building features Estimated costs to bring schools into good overall condition	*School Facilities: Conditions of America's Schools* (GAO/HEHS-95-61, Feb. 1, 1995); *School Facilities: America's Schools Report Differing Conditions* (GAO/HEHS-96-103, June 14, 1996); and *School Facilities: Profiles of School Conditions by State* (GAO/HEHS-96-148, June 1996)
Environmental conditions	*School Facilities: America's Schools Not Designed or Equipped for 21st Century* (GAO/HEHS-95-95, Apr. 4, 1995); *School Facilities: Condition of America's Schools* (GAO/HEHS-95-61, Feb. 1, 1995); *School Facilities: America's Schools Report Differing Conditions* (GAO/HEHS-96-103, June 14, 1996); and *School Facilities: Profiles of School Conditions by State* (GAO/HEHS-96-148, June 1996)
Functional requirements for education reform Technology	*School Facilities: America's Schools Not Designed or Equipped for 21st Century* (GAO/HEHS-95-95, Apr. 4, 1995)
Federal mandates	*School Facilities: Conditions of America's Schools* (GAO/HEHS-95-61, Feb. 1, 1995); *School Facilities: America's Schools Report Differing Conditions* (GAO/HEHS-96-103, June 14, 1996); and *School Facilities: Accessibility for the Disabled Still an Issue* (GAO/HEHS-96-73, Dec. 29, 1995); and *School Facilities: Profiles of School Conditions by State* (GAO/HEHS-96-148, June 1996)
State role in school facilities	*School Facilities: State's Financial and Technical Support Varies* (GAO/HEHS-96-27, Nov. 28, 1995)
Financing	*School Finance: Trends in U.S. Education Spending* (GAO/HEHS-95-235, Sept. 1995); *School Finance: Three States' Experiences with Equity in School Funding* (GAO/HEHS-96-39, Dec. 1995)

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